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ABSTRACT

This presentation describes a program being developed at South Plains College (SPC) of Lubbock to train paraprofessional helpers at the two-year degree level. As an interface between the training of helpers at the four-year and graduate degree levels of preparation and the non-degree or extra-degree level of preparation in the helping professions, this program is structured upon the model for training described in the 1973 ACES monograph, Preparation of Guidance Associates and Professional Counselors Within the Framework of a Competency-Based Program. The methods of instruction are discussed, including the use of Teaching Learning Units (TLU's) defining specific behaviorally-expressed goals for preparation and appropriate measures of instructional outcome. Articulation from lower levels of preparation to the two-year degree program as well as from the two-year degree program to more advanced levels of preparation is also discussed. A review of the current status of paraprofessional usage and helping profession manpower needs is included, with the issue of placement of paraprofessional helpers in general and SPC program graduates specifically addressed. Finally, options for program evaluation, present and future, are outlined, with a systems evaluation approach under serious consideration for later adoption. (Author)

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PARA- AND PRE-PROFESSIONALS IN STUDENT DEVELOPMENT SERVICES
Part III.
"Training Paraprofessionals in Human Services at the AAS degree level"[1]

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Part III.
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The development of performance-based training programs in the helping professions is no longer novel, as a review of the Stanford Program described by Hendricks, Ferguson, and Thoreson (1973) reveals, but until recently an integration of the competency-based training concept with the idea of differentiated staffing, in the form of a career-ladder model, had not been attempted. This integration was formulated by Dameron, et.al. (1973) in the ACES Monograph entitled Preparation of Guidance Associates and Professional Counselors Within the Framework of a Competency-Based Program. The methods for training helpers at the two levels defined in the Monograph have been adapted for use nationwide in delineating: the four-year degree pre-professional guidance associate; and the graduate degree professional counselor. The format of the Monograph is straightforward in presentation of the competency-based model. A division of function into (a) personal characteristics and (b) professional competencies is made. Delineation of the helping characteristic or function is then followed by a goal statement for that trait. The final stage relates specific training objectives and methods for their implementation to the behaviorally-expressed goals.

The Monograph provides a clear starting point for the preparation of helpers at both the four-year and graduate degree levels, but the initial rung of the career ladder, the para-professional level, is less clearly

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defined. However, the fundamental operating premise in the development of the two-year degree Human Services Technician Program at South Plains College (SPC) is that the basic format of the ACES Monograph is equally applicable to training at that level. The SPC program has therefore been developed as a downward extension of the competency-based, career-ladder model to include statements specifically relevant for the two-year level of preparation.

Background of the Program

South Plains College is a two-year college with an enrollment of slightly less than 2,000 students serving both rural and urban target populations through provision of academic and technical-vocational instruction. South Plains College is involved in the development of a two-year degree program designed to prepare helping personnel in the area of Human Services, a program leading to an associate degree in Human Services Technology. Following a common freshman core curriculum involving preparation in basic academic and general helping skills, the student may opt for his second year of training in either the Mental Health Associate or Social Worker Assistant areas.

Many of the program participants are part-time students, presently working in helping settings, who already possess related competencies developed on-the-job. The approach in the SPC training program is to utilize those skills already present as a base upon which to refine and enhance current competencies while adding new ones through additional training. Courses are often offered at night or other times convenient for part-time students, and courses are frequently taught by adjunct personnel from the professional community who are currently active in providing

direct helping services.

Actual instruction is based upon the general competencies to be acquired and the overall process outcomes and/or goal statements. Teaching Learning Units (TLU's) are used to transform the conceptual and behavioral statements into viable instructional units. Program evaluation is linked to the stated competencies and goals, and recycling procedures are utilized for students requiring additional opportunities to demonstrate competencies. A systems evaluation method of program evaluation, as described by Bergland and Quatrano (1973), is under consideration for potential application at a later stage of program development. The use of the TLU method which combines skill development, knowledge acquisition, and attitudinal orientation allows students a greater flexibility than the more traditional classroom mode of instruction and evaluation. In terms of overall helper-helpee objectives, the SPC training program does not differ substantially from many others in operation, such as the program of the College of DuPage in Glen Ellyn, Illinois.

Programs of the type now being developed at SPC do, however, represent a new and different approach to training at the two-year level. Training is centered around both the competency-based concept and a format which provides a downward extension of the career ladder model already developed and operational at the four-year degree (pre-professional) and graduate degree (professional) levels (Dameron, et.al., 1973). The present program at SPC is an attempt to "bridge the gap" between training programs already developed for helpers at more advanced levels of preparation and the preparation of paraprofessionals either on-the-job or in workshop settings such as offered during recent summer terms at Kent State University.

Students completing the SPC training program have available to them two immediate options. The first allows the student to continue his formal training to the bachelor's degree level. This may occur in a program oriented specifically for further development of helping skills (the guidance associate level in the career ladder model) or in programs such as the Bachelor of Science in Occupational Education (oriented toward preparation for instruction in helping skills in educational and agency settings) and the Bachelor of Applied Arts and Sciences (oriented toward administration in helping settings). In the case of the bachelor's degree at the guidance associate level, the competencies to be acquired at the higher level utilize the basic skills already obtained in the two-year training program. For those students completing the AAS degree in Human Services and others of similar nature, it may be necessary to acquire some basic academic requirements in areas such as liberal arts and the sciences prior to entrance into the four-year degree program, but the central point is that competencies acquired by the helper trained at the two-year level do provide the student with options. This is possible because the emphasis is upon integration of competencies rather accumulation of credit hours and awarding of certificates or degrees. The second option is direct entrance into employment in helping positions commensurate with attained competencies.

PROGRAM RELEVANCY AND EMPLOYMENT POTENTIAL

The orientation to helper training at SPC is to provide skills which are broad-based in nature, enabling program graduates to function in a wide variety of helping situations. The helping field is rapidly expanding the opportunities for employment of the paraprofessional helper. For example,

Lutker (1975) has noted the use of paraprofessionals as group leaders in academic probation counseling at the college level, while Shelton and Corazzini (1976) have discussed the use of paraprofessionals in college residence halls. In fact, Crane, et.al. (1975) have examined attitudes and usage of paraprofessionals in college counseling centers, a major conclusion emerging that opportunities exist for trained helpers such as those prepared at the two-year degree level as at SPC. However, in addition to the more traditional, guidance-oriented functions, many allied health service fields such as child care and development, welfare and juvenile services, adult education, law enforcement and correctional activities, employment agencies, religious settings, housing and recreation programs, geriatric services, drug and alcohol abuse programs, and mental health settings of all types present potential employment opportunities for the paraprofessional, human services technician to demonstrate his competencies. To illustrate, Varenhorst; Allen; Nicoletti and Flater-Benz; Thomas and Yates; Gordon; and Rudow (1974) have described in a special issue of the Personnel and Guidance Journal some emerging uses of paraprofessionals. Dameron and Wolf (1974) have presented a model for incoporating the two-year degree helper into the service team for higher education academic advisement.

The issue of placement is not and must not be taken lightly, as although program graduates from human services training do possess many valuable competencies potentially useful in varied settings, education of the professional community is required to insure that program graduates have the opportunity to show what they can do. As graduates of programs such as that of SPC begin to enter the helping labor market, it can then be left to them to demonstrate their competencies and value in many diverse settings.

PROGRAM GOALS AND DIRECTIONS FOR THE FUTURE

At SPC there is an awareness of the problems and challenges inherent in developing a competency-based, two-year degree program for helpers which extends the ACES Monograph model to include helpers trained below the four-year degree level. For this reason, as an integral part of the program development, a program evaluation phase is being developed concurrently with the training regimen. The ultimate goal of such evaluation is twofold: (a) definition of a detailed statement of competencies and objectives as a downward extension of the ACES Monograph base to include the two-year degree paraprofessional helper, and (b) corresponding development of a viable, relevant training program to implement this statement to produce helpers possessing the defined skills and competencies. Alteration of the instructional format to include perhaps segments of a systems approach as suggested by Stilwell and Santoro (1976) may prove applicable, and information regarding strategies already in use in training paraprofessionals at the two-year degree level and below such as those outlined by Danish and Brock (1974) are being examined for relevance to the twofold goal of program development and program evaluation.

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